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# *Juristat* Article

## Maintenance enforcement by neighbourhood income in seven reporting census metropolitan areas

by Paul Robinson

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**Note of appreciation**

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## Symbols

. not available for any reference period
.. not available for a specific reference period
... not applicable
0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
$0^s$ value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
$^p$ preliminary
$^r$ revised
x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
$^E$ use with caution
F too unreliable to be published

## Maintenance enforcement by neighbourhood income in seven reporting census metropolitan areas: Highlights

- About 5% of children in the seven census metropolitan areas (CMAs) reporting to the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton) were enrolled in Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEPs) on July 1, 2008.
- In March 2009, the median monthly amount of regular child support due for cases with one child support beneficiary was $238 for families from the lowest income neighbourhoods, compared to $300 for families from the highest income neighbourhoods in the seven CMAs.
- In the lowest income neighbourhoods of the seven CMAs, in 56% of cases the recipient received their monthly support payment in full compared to 66% of cases in the highest income neighbourhoods.
- In 2008/2009, MEPs collected 78% of amounts due in cases where the recipient lived in the lowest income neighbourhoods; for the highest income neighbourhoods, MEPs collected 85% of amounts due.
- Money from federal interceptions of income tax refunds and other federal funds constituted a larger proportion of payments received by families in the lowest income neighbourhoods.

# Maintenance enforcement by neighbourhood income in seven reporting census metropolitan areas

by Paul Robinson

During the 1980s and 1990s, all provincial and territorial governments created Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEPs) to provide assistance to payors and recipients of child and spousal support, and to improve compliance with support payments primarily for the benefit of the children involved in the parental break up (Statistics Canada, 2002). Through provincial and territorial legislation, the programs were given a number of administrative enforcement powers to secure payments before resorting to the courts. In 1987, the federal government enacted the *Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act* (FOAEAA), which, among other legislative powers, allowed the government to redirect income tax refunds and federal payments from a non-compliant payor to the recipient.

Not all families receiving child support enrol in a Maintenance Enforcement Program. The decision to enrol in a MEP, or have the MEP enforce the case, resides primarily with the recipient of the support payment, usually the parent residing with the children (the child beneficiaries of the support are also considered enrolled in the program). According to the General Social Survey, in 2006, just over one-third of parents with a child support arrangement in Canada (includes both payors and recipients), who divorced or separated between 2001 and 2006, had their child support case registered with a MEP.

All MEPs except those in Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and Nunavut report data to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics through either the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP) or the Maintenance Enforcement Survey (MES), and data from these surveys are published annually (Robinson, 2009).

This report examines maintenance enforcement cases enrolled in 2008/2009 by neighbourhood income in the census metropolitan areas (CMAs) from the four provinces reporting to the SMEP that have CMAs: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In the SMEP, no data are available on the income of families receiving support. However, an analytical technique employed by researchers is to use the income of the neighbourhood in which persons or families live as a measure of socio-economic status (Luo et al, 2004; Luo et al, 2006; Urquia et al, 2007). Based on this work, which has primarily been done in the health field, this article will utilize family income information available from the 2006 Census to profile differences in maintenance enforcement cases in different types of neighbourhoods within reporting CMAs.

CMAs include the urban core and adjacent municipalities with a high degree of social and economic integration with the urban core. There are seven CMAs included in this study: Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton. Neighbourhoods correspond to census tracts (CTs), which are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population of 2,500 to 8,000 and are as homogeneous as possible in terms of socio-economic characteristics, including economic status and social living conditions. The analysis is limited to CMAs, as these are the only geographic classifications that contain CTs.[1]

More specifically, this report examines the incomes of female lone-parent families in the seven CMAs. Female lone-parent families, as defined by the Census, are those families headed by a mother, with one or more children living in the dwelling, and with no spouse or common-law partner present. The focus is placed on these particular families because they most closely resemble the clients of Maintenance Enforcement Programs who are receiving support.[2] On July 1, 2008, for example, the recipient in 96% of cases enrolled in MEPs in the seven CMAs was female and 97% of cases had child beneficiaries.

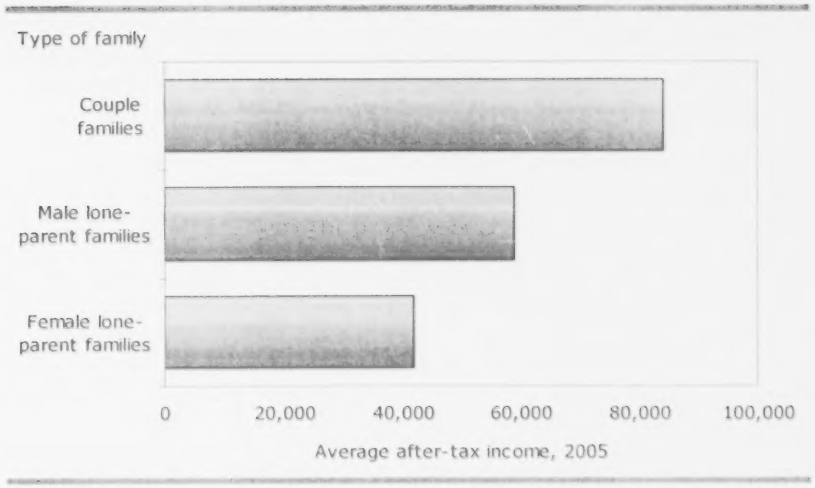
Using family income data from the 2006 Census, neighbourhoods in each CMA are classified into five equal groups or quintiles based on the percentage of female lone-parent families in low income.[3] Families are considered in low income if their after-tax income is below the low income after-tax cut-off (LICO-AT). Cut-offs are set at an income level, differentiated by the size of family and area of residence, where a family would spend 20 percentage points more of their after-tax income on food, shelter and clothing than the average family. The one-fifth of neighbourhoods with the greatest proportions of female-lone parent families living in low income are classified as the lowest income neighbourhoods.[4]

The first part of the article analyses the incomes of female lone-parent families in the seven CMAs, and compares them with other types of families. Next, the report looks at the number and proportion of children enrolled in MEPs that come from the lowest income neighbourhoods versus other neighbourhoods. The final part of the article profiles differences between MEP cases from the lowest income neighbourhoods and those from other types of neighbourhoods by comparing the amount of payments due, compliance and collection indicators, and use of enforcement tools.

## Incomes of female lone-parent families lowest of all economic family types

Incomes for lone-parent mothers were the lowest of all the major economic family types in 2005,[5] and have been the lowest over the 25-year period between 1980 and 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2008). In 2005, the average after-tax income was $41,887 for female lone-parent families living in Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton, compared to $59,065 for male lone-parent families and $84,234 for couple families.

Chart 1
Average incomes for female lone-parent families considerably lower than average income for couple families




**Note:** figures are a weighted average, based on the number of families, of all the reporting census metropolitan areas: Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Family incomes vary somewhat by CMA (Table 1). Average incomes in the eastern CMAs were lower than those in the western centres, particularly Alberta. For lone-parent mothers, average incomes were lowest in Saint John ($31,800) and highest in Calgary ($48,400).

Families headed by lone-parent mothers are more likely to live in low income. Almost 24% of female lone-parent families were in low income in the seven CMAs, compared to 11% of male lone-parent families and 5% of couple families.

Text Table 1
Prevalence of families in after-tax low income in 2005, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census Metropolitan areas | Prevalence of low income | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | female lone-parent families | male lone-parent families | couple families |
| | percent | | |
| Halifax | 23.8 | 11.0 | 4.4 |
| Moncton | 24.6 | 18.2 | 4.3 |
| Saint John | 28.4 | 10.8 | 4.7 |
| Regina | 24.1 | 11.3 | 2.9 |
| Saskatoon | 30.0 | 13.5 | 4.2 |
| Calgary | 20.5 | 9.9 | 5.3 |
| Edmonton | 23.8 | 9.3 | 4.9 |
| **Total** | **23.6** | **10.6** | **4.8** |

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Lone-parent mothers tend to rely more on government transfers and other income sources, which includes child support, than couple families or lone-parent fathers. In 2005, non-employment income constituted 28% of total income for female lone-parent families, compared to 17% for both male lone-parent families and couple families in the seven CMAs.

## About 5% of children in reporting CMAs were enrolled in MEPs

On July 1, 2008, about 5% of children aged 19 years or under living in the reporting CMAs were enrolled in provincial Maintenance Enforcement Programs (Text table 2).[6] The proportion of children enrolled ranged from 3% of children in Saskatoon to 9% of children in Saint John.

Text Table 2
Proportion of children (19 years and under) enrolled in provincial Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) on July 1, 2008, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Total children | Children enrolled in MEPs | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | number | | percent |
| Halifax | 86,435 | 5,560 | 6.4 |
| Moncton | 27,967 | 2,295 | 8.2 |
| Saint John | 29,659 | 2,640 | 8.9 |
| Regina[1] | 51,380 | 1,870 | 3.6 |
| Saskatoon[1] | 62,418 | 1,925 | 3.1 |
| Calgary | 286,317 | 10,890 | 3.8 |
| Edmonton | 270,210 | 14,225 | 5.3 |
| **Total** | **814,386** | **39,405** | **4.8** |

1. For Regina and Saskatoon, counts of children enrolled in Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEPs) are from December 31, 2009.
**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. As a result of the random rounding methodology, some small differences can be expected in the corresponding values between tables.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and Demography Division, Estimates of population by Age and Sex for Census Divisions, Census Metropolitan Areas and Economic Regions (Component Method) (accessed December 9, 2009).

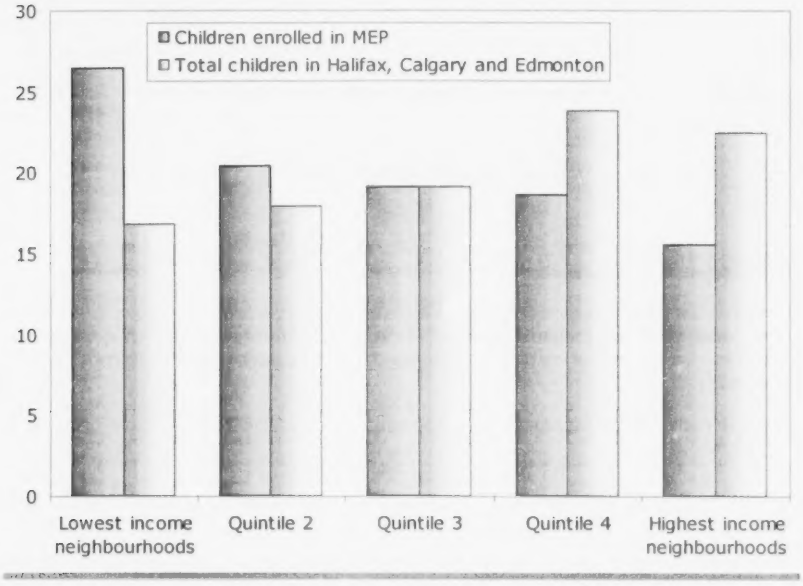
Variations in the proportions of children enrolled among CMAs could be attributable to different registration procedures employed by the MEPs. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, for example, are opt-out jurisdictions where all new court orders for support are automatically filed directly from the court to the MEP; the recipient may opt-out of the program if he or she does not want to use the MEP services. Saskatchewan and Alberta, on the other hand, are opt-in jurisdictions where, in most cases, the recipient is responsible to initiate registration with the MEP.[7]

## More children in MEPs came from the lowest income neighbourhoods in the three CMAs studied

The distribution of children enrolled in MEPs is not evenly spread across neighbourhoods in the three CMAs for which data are available for May 2006 (Map 1, Halifax) (Map 2, Calgary) (Map 3, Edmonton). The lowest income neighbourhoods in Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton had the highest proportion of children in MEPs (Table 2).[8] In the three CMAs, 9% of children living in the lowest income neighbourhoods were enrolled in MEPs, compared to 4% of children from the highest income neighbourhoods. In the lowest income neighbourhoods, the proportion of children enrolled in MEPs was highest in Halifax (11%) and lowest in Calgary (8%).

Not only was the proportion of children enrolled in MEPs highest in the lowest income neighbourhoods, the actual number of children enrolled in MEPs from the lowest income neighbourhoods was also greatest (Chart 2). In May 2006, about 8,800 children enrolled in MEPs in the three CMAs were from the lowest income neighbourhoods; on the other hand, 5,200 children were from the highest income neighbourhoods.

Chart 2
More than a quarter of the children enrolled in Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEP) are from the lowest-income neighbourhoods




**Note:** Excludes neighbourhoods with 30 or fewer female lone-parent families.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population and Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

## Median monthly amount of regular support due 21% less for families in lowest income neighbourhoods

In March 2009, the median monthly amount of regular support due for families was $318 (Text table 3) in the seven CMAs. Moncton and Saint John had the lowest median amount due ($238), while Calgary and Edmonton had the highest ($350). Regular support is the ongoing maintenance payments, which are usually monthly, that the payor is required to make under a court order or support agreement registered with court.

The amount of child support due is often calculated using the child support guidelines (Department of Justice, 2002). Court orders for support made under the *Divorce Act* generally use the federal child support guidelines. Some jurisdictions also have similar provincial child support guidelines for orders authorized by provincial legislation. The guidelines primarily consider the income of the payor, the number of child beneficiaries and the province or territory where the payor lives to determine the amount of support.

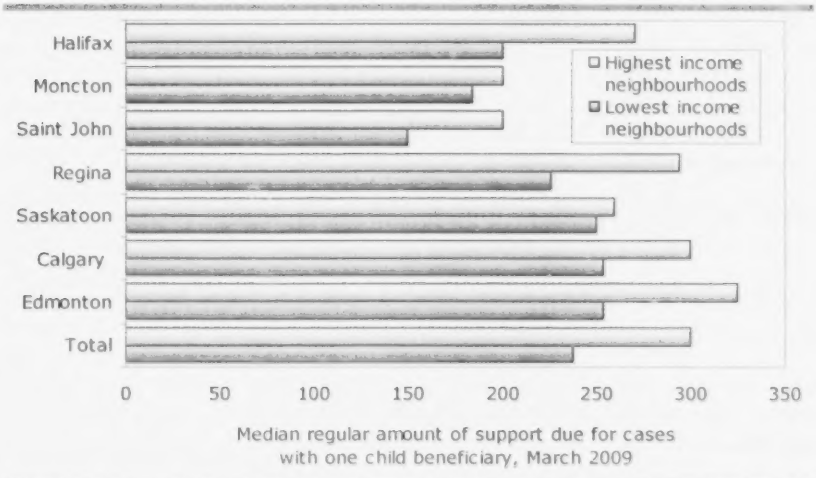
Text Table 3
Median regular payment due for March 2009, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Median payment due[1] |
|---|---|
| | amount in dollars |
| Halifax | 300 |
| Moncton | 238 |
| Saint John | 238 |
| Regina | 300 |
| Saskatoon | 318 |
| Calgary | 350 |
| Edmonton | 350 |
| **Total** | **318** |

1. The median calculation excludes cases with no payment due. Cases may have a $0 amount due for several reasons including: they have no regular ongoing obligation, they only have arrears, or they have a different payment schedule, such as quarterly.
**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. As a result of the random rounding methodology, some small differences can be expected in the corresponding values between tables.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

In the lowest income neighbourhoods, the median amount due for families with one child beneficiary was $238 (Chart 3) which was 21% lower than the median amount due in the highest income neighbourhoods ($300). The largest difference was in Halifax, where the median payment due was 26% less than in the highest income neighbourhoods. For families in the seven CMAs with more than one child beneficiary, median amounts due were 25% lower in the lowest income neighbourhoods compared to the highest income neighbourhoods.

Chart 3
Median regular payment due in March 2009 lower in lowest income neighbourhoods in seven census metropolitan areas




**Note:** Includes Non-Interjurisdictional support order and Interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. As the amount of payment due increases with each additional child support beneficiary, to enhance comparability, the chart is limited to Maintenance Enforcement Program cases with only one child support beneficiary, who is 19 years of age or under as of March 31, 2009.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population and Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

Besides generally having lower amounts due, there are other case characteristics that are more prevalent in families living in the lowest income neighbourhoods (Table 3). For example, more families have their payment assigned to the Crown. Assignment occurs when the recipient is on social assistance, and payments received on the case go to the government to offset social assistance costs. More families in the lowest income neighbourhoods also have their child support payments authorized under provincial legislation, as opposed to the *Divorce Act*. Provincial or territorial legislation is used to authorize support payments in the following situations: the parents are ending a common-law union, or married parents are separating but not divorcing.

## Compliance and collection rates were lower in lowest income neighbourhoods

Although the amounts due are lower in the lowest income neighbourhoods, fewer families in these neighbourhoods are receiving their child support payments compared to families living elsewhere in the CMA. In March 2009, for the seven CMAs, 56% of families in the lowest income neighbourhoods received their regular payment in full and another 10% received partial payment (Text table 4). For the highest income neighbourhoods, 66% of families received their regular payment in full and another 16% received partial payment. In each CMA, although the majority of cases that are enrolled are enforced by the provincial MEP, some cases are interjurisdictional and are enforced by an out-of-province MEP, or even a child support agency in another country, if the payor lives or has assets in another province or country. The proportion of cases enforced by an out-of-province MEP ranged from 8% in Edmonton to 19% in Saskatoon.

Text Table 4
Percentage of cases in full compliance with monthly regular payment, March 2009, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Lowest income neighbourhoods | Highest income neighbourhoods | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | percent | | |
| Halifax[1] | 55.5 | 61.4 | **60.6** |
| Moncton | 55.3 | 65.1 | **61.0** |
| Saint John | 59.9 | 71.5 | **67.4** |
| Regina | 58.6 | 66.1 | **63.3** |
| Saskatoon | 64.7 | 67.9 | **69.3** |
| Calgary | 53.1 | 65.6 | **58.9** |
| Edmonton | 56.3 | 67.7 | **62.5** |
| **Total** | **56.0** | **66.3** | **61.9** |

1. Nova Scotia allows direct payments in exceptional circumstances to be made and received by their clientele, however, unauthorized direct payments are not encouraged. Since some of these direct payments are not reported until after the survey data are collected, some payors are reported as not having paid, even though they actually have. About 1% of cases each month report a payment, or payments, being made in a previous month.

**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

Compliance rates for both the lowest and highest income neighbourhoods have gradually increased over the four year period from 2005/2006 to 2008/2009 in Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton (the three CMAs for which data are available) (Table 4). This finding was also true provincially.

The collection rate is another indicator used by the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs to measure compliance. The collection rate represents the amount of money received for a group of cases over the fiscal year as a percentage of the amount that was due. Unlike the compliance rate which includes only on-time, regular payments, the collection rate also includes late payments and non-regular payments due, such as event driven payments, scheduled arrears payments and other payments due to the jurisdiction. In most jurisdictions, regular payments due constitute more than 97% of total payment due. The one exception is Alberta, where 85% of total payments due are regular payments (Martin and Robinson, 2008).

In the five CMAs (Regina and Saskatoon are excluded from all 2008/2009 fiscal year analysis, as Saskatchewan began reporting data in January 2009), the collection rate was 78% for the lowest income neighbourhoods, compared to 85% in the highest income neighbourhoods (Table 5). Halifax was the only CMA where the collection rate for the lowest income neighbourhoods was higher than for the highest income neighbourhoods.

With proportionally fewer families receiving their full support payments each month, not surprisingly a higher percentage of cases in the lowest income neighbourhoods are owed arrears for previously missed support payments. About 68% of families from the lowest income neighbourhoods are owed arrears, compared to 59% from the highest income neighbourhoods (Table 6). In general, more money was owed to families from the lowest income neighbourhoods. The median amount owing ($4,766) was 15% higher than the median amount for families owed arrears in the highest income neighbourhoods.

## In the lowest income neighbourhoods, proportionally more money received comes from federal interceptions

If support payments are not forthcoming, MEPs can undertake a variety of actions to enforce payment. There are two main categories of enforcement actions: administrative enforcement (for example, wage garnishments, motor vehicle license interventions) and court enforcement (primarily default hearings). Administrative enforcement powers are derived from both provincial and federal legislation. In Alberta, for example, administrative enforcement activities were taken against approximately two-thirds of payors in 2008/2009.[9]

A common enforcement tool used by MEPs is federal interceptions. Under FOAEAA, MEPs can intercept and redirect federal funds, such as income tax refunds or employment insurance benefits, to offset support arrears. In 2008/2009, about $143 million of federal funds were intercepted and redistributed to child support recipients in all provinces and territories (Department of Justice, 2009). MEPs can also garnish the salaries and pensions of federal government employees under the federal *Garnishment, Attachment, and Pension Diversion Act* (GAPDA). For the programs reporting to the SMEP, however, federal garnishments are used much less frequently than interceptions (Robinson, 2009).

In the five CMAs (excludes Regina and Saskatoon), an estimated $8.3 million in federal interceptions and federal garnishments were received by the MEPs in 2008/2009,[10] which accounted for about 8% of total payments received (Table 7).[11] Relative to higher income neighbourhoods, federal interceptions and garnishments were a more important payment source for families in the lowest income neighbourhoods. In the five CMAs, an estimated 11% of total payment received was from federal interceptions in the lowest income neighbourhoods, compared to 6% for the highest income neighbourhoods.

## Summary

In Canada, female lone-parent families have tended to be more disadvantaged socio-economically than other types of families. In 2005, in the seven CMAs analysed in the article (Halifax, Moncton, Saint John, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton), average after-tax income for female lone-parent families was less than half that of couple families; almost one-quarter of female lone-parent families lived in low income and female lone-parent families relied more heavily on non-employment sources of income.

In the seven CMAs, about 5% of children were enrolled in MEPs on July 1, 2008. Saskatoon had the smallest proportion (3%) and Saint John the highest (9%). Within these CMAs, more children enrolled in MEPs come from the lowest income neighbourhoods. In June 2006, about 9% of children in the lowest income neighbourhoods of Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton were enrolled in a MEP, compared to 4% of children in the highest income neighbourhoods.

Differences exist between MEP cases in the lowest income neighbourhoods versus other types of neighbourhoods. In particular, cases from the lowest income neighbourhoods generally have lower compliance and collection rates, and are more likely to have arrears. With lower compliance, more enforcement is required to secure payments for families in the lowest income neighbourhoods. For example, as a percentage of total payments received, federal interceptions play a greater role in lowest income neighbourhoods (an estimated 11% of total payment received) than highest income neighbourhoods (6%).

## Description of Methodology

*Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs*

The Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs (SMEP) is currently being implemented by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) at Statistics Canada. The SMEP gathers information on maintenance enforcement cases, and on some of the key characteristics associated with those cases. This includes the number of cases enrolled and the age and sex of the recipients and payors of support. In addition, survey data provide information on financial matters, the processing of payments, and the tracing and enforcement actions taken by Maintenance Enforcement Programs (MEPs).

Currently seven provinces and territories report data to the SMEP (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon and the Northwest Territories). Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia report to the Maintenance Enforcement Survey (MES), which is the older aggregate data survey.

*Geo-coding*

The SMEP collects residential postal codes of the recipient in each case enrolled. Children involved with the case are assumed to reside with the recipient. The Postal Code Conversion File Plus (PCCF+), version 5e, was used to convert postal codes for recipients into standard geographic codes for locating recipients by census metropolitan areas and census tracts. When the association between the postal code and census geography is not unique, the PCCF+ allows for a proportional allocation based on the population count.

In census metropolitan areas, postal codes are generally associated with one census tract, so errors are minimal when converting postal codes. However, occasionally a postal code may be associated with two or more census tracts that are in different income quintiles, resulting in erroneously identifying children as living in one type of neighbourhood when they may not be. In Calgary, for example, 0.8% of children classified as living in the lowest income neighbourhoods may actually had lived in another type of neighbourhood.

*Income quintiles*
The categorization of income quintiles was based on the proportion of female lone-parent families below the after-tax low income cut-off (LICO-AT) in each census tract (CT).

CTs were ranked from lowest proportion to the highest, then divided into five equal groups, called quintiles. The CTs with the greatest proportions of female lone-parent families in low income were labelled the lowest income neighbourhoods. Prevalence of low income in CTs is based upon rounded data. Some small discrepancies may exist between rounded proportions and actual proportions of families in low income.

The after-tax low income measure was used over other measures because it takes into account family structure (e.g. a four person family requires more money than a two person family), whereas median and average income do not. The income of female lone-parent families was used exclusively, because this type of family most closely resembles the structure of a typical family receiving child support that is enrolled in a MEP.

## Definitions

### Administrative enforcement actions
Administrative activities are those enforcement mechanisms employed by the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) itself. Administrative enforcement actions include traces, demands for information from the payor or from others, garnishments, actions against land registration, personal property liens, writs of execution, collection calls, credit bureau reporting, motor vehicle license interventions, and other actions (includes, for example, hunting and fishing license restrictions).

### Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)
A census metropolitan area is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated a round a major urban core, with a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. In 2008, there were 33 CMAs in Canada, representing more than two-thirds of the Canadian population.

### Child Support Guidelines
The regulations for setting child support payments under the federal *Divorce Act* are called the Federal Child Support Guidelines, and came into effect on May 1, 1997. The guidelines consist of a set of rules and tables for calculating the amount of support that parents should contribute towards their children. Most provinces and territories have a similar set of guidelines for child support orders made under the authority of provincial legislation.

The Guidelines include various rules that apply to determine support based on the type of custody arrangements. Amounts may also be adjusted when there are special expenses (for example, to cover child care costs) or to prevent undue financial hardship for a parent.

Use of the Guidelines in determining the amount of child support is mandatory. Parents however can agree to an amount that differs from the Guidelines, either higher or lower, if they think it better reflects their situation. If they go to court, the amount will be set in accordance with the Guidelines, unless there are special circumstances that benefit the child or the payor can prove undue hardship if required to pay the Guideline amount.

### Collection rate
Total amounts received by the maintenance enforcement programs for a group of cases over the fiscal year that are divided by total amounts due over the same time period. A rate of 100% would mean the amount received equalled the amount due.

### Compliance rate

For purposes of the survey, compliance means that at least the amount expected in a month is received or applied (essentially advanced payment received in a prior month is applied against a payment due in the current month when no payment is received, so that the case does not go into arrears). Cases in compliance may also have arrears. The determination of compliance is only made against the current amount due in a month.

The rate is the proportion of cases with an amount due that were in compliance in a given month. Full compliance rate is the percent of cases that made their payment in full and partial compliance rate is the percent of cases that made partial payment.

### Court enforcement actions

Court-based enforcement of support orders involves court and judge time and is generally employed as a last resort. These tend to be more serious enforcement actions, involving default hearings, issuing of warrants, and default orders, and may culminate in fines or jail.

### Default hearings

A hearing before a master/court administrator or judge to determine what action may be appropriate in the face of a failure to make support payments.

### Event-driven payments

Amounts that are due because of some situation that has arisen if provided for in the order or agreement. For instance, an event-driven payment could be for tuition, dental work or lessons.

### Federal garnishment

Garnishments made pursuant to the Queen's Regulations and Orders, and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act (GAPDA).

### Interception of federal funds

Under the *Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act (Part II)*, the maintenance enforcement program can intercept federal funds, such as income tax refunds, Employment Insurance benefits, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan benefits, and interest on regular Canada Savings Bonds.

### Lone-parent families

The Census definition of a lone-parent family is a mother or a father, with no spouse or common law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more children. This includes children living with one parent following a parental breakup, single parents of adopted children, a grandparent or other family member who is responsible for the day-to-day care of the children, and widows or widowers (19% of lone-parents in 2006 were widows). Moreover, children in a lone-parent family could be an adult child. In 2006, 31% of the 2 million children that lived in lone-parent families were 20 years of age or older.

### Low income after-tax cut-offs (LICO-AT)

The low income after-tax cut-offs are set at after-tax income levels, differentiated by size of family and area of residence, where families spend 20 percentage points more of their after-tax income than the average family on food, shelter and clothing.

### Median

The median is the middle point of a distribution, when the units are arranged in increasing or decreasing order based on a quantitative variable (such as income, age, or payment due). One half of the group is above the median and one-half below it.

### Other payments due to the jurisdiction

Some jurisdictions charge fees or penalties against the payor. Some common examples of fees include default penalties for missed or late payments, and charges for NSF cheques.

### Payor

The payor is the person named in the order/agreement who provides the support payments. Some Maintenance Enforcement Programs refer to the payor as the "debtor" or "respondent". The payor is usually the non-resident parent of the child beneficiaries.

### Recipient of child and/or spousal support

The recipient is the person named in the order/agreement to receive the support and is generally the parent with whom the children live. Sometimes the recipient is a grandparent or another person responsible for the children. The money the recipient receives could be for the benefit of the recipient, for dependent child(ren), or for both. Some Maintenance Enforcement Programs refer to the recipient as the "creditor" or "claimant".

### Scheduled arrears payments

Occasionally, arrears are subject to a repayment schedule. Scheduled arrears payments are the schedule amounts due each month (or some other scheduled interval, such as weekly or quarterly) that the payor is required to make in order to pay off arrears. If the payor makes his scheduled arrears payment, then usually the Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) will not take further enforcement. However, if these payments are missed, MEPs will then take enforcement action against the payor.

## Detailed data tables

Table 1
Average after-tax income in 2005 by family type, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Female lone-parent families | Male lone-parent families | Couple families | All families |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | income in dollars | | | |
| Halifax | 36,027 | 46,147 | 69,895 | 64,505 |
| Moncton | 33,486 | 39,399 | 62,412 | 58,117 |
| Saint John | 31,849 | 41,836 | 64,781 | 59,051 |
| Regina | 38,517 | 48,754 | 74,592 | 67,879 |
| Saskatoon | 34,783 | 47,094 | 72,844 | 66,190 |
| Calgary | 48,382 | 73,177 | 99,158 | 92,224 |
| Edmonton | 43,495 | 58,848 | 83,340 | 77,174 |
| **Total** | **41,887** | **59,065** | **84,234** | **77,785** |

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

Table 2
Proportion of children (19 years and under) in each type of neighbourhood that were enrolled in the Maintenance Enforcement Program, June 2006, three census metropolitan areas

| Income level of neighbourhood | Census metropolitan areas | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Halifax | Calgary | Edmonton | |
| | proportion of children | | | |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 10.5 | 7.5 | 9.3 | 8.6 |
| Quintile 2 | 8.5 | 4.2 | 7.8 | 6.3 |
| Quintile 3 | 6.9 | 4.5 | 5.9 | 5.5 |
| Quintile 4 | 6.4 | 3.6 | 4.4 | 4.3 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 5.2 | 2.9 | 4.4 | 3.8 |

**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. Excludes neighbourhoods with 30 or fewer female lone-parent families.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and 2006 Census of Population.

Table 3
Proportion of cases assigned and cases with support obligations authorized by provincial legislation, March 2009, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Total cases | | Cases assigned to Crown | Authority of order–provincial legislation[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | number | | percent | |
| **Halifax** | **3,810** | **100** | **15.7** | **65.1** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 790 | 100 | 27.6 | 76.5 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 570 | 100 | 7.9 | 55.2 |
| **Moncton[1]** | **1,735** | **100** | **26.0** | **76.7** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 350 | 100 | 32.0 | 81.5 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 250 | 100 | 19.5 | 74.1 |
| **Saint John[1]** | **1,995** | **100** | **27.9** | **73.6** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 380 | 100 | 50.3 | 89.2 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 295 | 100 | 19.4 | 66.8 |
| **Regina** | **1,325** | **100** | **5.0** | **62.2** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 300 | 100 | 9.0 | 72.9 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 195 | 100 | 1.0 | 51.4 |
| **Saskatoon** | **1,325** | **100** | **3.4** | **54.9** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 320 | 100 | 7.5 | 61.3 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 215 | 100 | 0.9 | 44.4 |
| **Calgary** | **7,380** | **100** | **9.0** | **60.2** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 1,980 | 100 | 15.2 | 70.9 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 1,170 | 100 | 2.3 | 49.2 |
| **Edmonton** | **9,760** | **100** | **8.2** | **59.0** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 2,260 | 100 | 14.6 | 71.4 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 1,635 | 100 | 3.4 | 48.1 |
| **Total** | **27,330** | **100** | **11.6** | **62.4** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 6,380 | 100 | 18.8 | 73.1 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 4,330 | 100 | 5.5 | 52.0 |

1. In New Brunswick, cases assigned includes cases with current payment assigned, along with cases that do not have a current assignment, but have arrears and the total amount of arrears is owed to the Crown.
2. Excludes cases with unknown order authority. In most instances, these are cases where the payment obligations have expired and the case remains open to collect arrears.
**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and 2006 Census of Population.

Table 4
Average monthly compliance rate by type of neighbourhood, 2005/2006 to 2008/2009, three census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | 2007/2008 | 2008/2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | average monthly compliance rate | | | |
| **Halifax**[1] | **50.5** | **51.9** | **54.1** | **57.1** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 45.2 | 47.4 | 50.4 | 52.4 |
| Quintile 2 | 50.9 | 52.6 | 55.8 | 59.4 |
| Quintile 3 | 51.0 | 52.1 | 54.2 | 59.0 |
| Quintile 4 | 54.6 | 54.6 | 57.0 | 57.8 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 53.4 | 53.7 | 54.1 | 58.0 |
| **Calgary** | **53.4** | **56.5** | **57.1** | **57.9** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 46.9 | 49.9 | 49.9 | 51.8 |
| Quintile 2 | 54.3 | 58.6 | 59.0 | 58.8 |
| Quintile 3 | 52.3 | 55.0 | 56.7 | 55.8 |
| Quintile 4 | 57.5 | 59.9 | 60.3 | 61.0 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 60.5 | 63.6 | 63.9 | 64.1 |
| **Edmonton** | **56.8** | **59.3** | **60.8** | **61.8** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 49.3 | 52.6 | 54.7 | 55.2 |
| Quintile 2 | 56.1 | 57.9 | 58.6 | 59.9 |
| Quintile 3 | 59.2 | 62.3 | 63.9 | 64.7 |
| Quintile 4 | 60.0 | 61.4 | 63.1 | 64.1 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 63.2 | 65.2 | 66.6 | 66.9 |

1. Nova Scotia allows direct payments in exceptional circumstances to be made and received by their clientele, however, unauthorized direct payments are not encouraged. Since some of these direct payments are not reported until after the survey data are collected, some payors are reported as not having paid, even though they actually have. About 1% of cases each month report a payment, or payments, being made in a previous month.

**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and 2006 Census of Population.

Table 5
Collection rates by type of neighbourhood, 2008/2009, five census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Amount due | Amount received | collection rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| | amount in millions of dollars | | rate |
| **Halifax** | **18.2** | **15.8** | **86.8** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 3.0 | 2.6 | 86.6 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 3.2 | 2.5 | 80.8 |
| **Moncton** | **5.9** | **4.8** | **81.9** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 1.0 | 0.8 | 81.1 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 0.9 | 0.7 | 81.6 |
| **Saint John** | **7.4** | **6.7** | **90.8** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 0.9 | 0.8 | 87.3 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 1.4 | 1.3 | 93.4 |
| **Calgary** | **44.3** | **34.8** | **78.4** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 9.9 | 7.4 | 73.8 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 8.3 | 6.9 | 82.6 |
| **Edmonton** | **58.5** | **49.3** | **84.3** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 11.3 | 8.7 | 77.6 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 11.7 | 10.1 | 86.3 |
| **Total** | **134.3** | **111.4** | **82.9** |
| lowest income neighbourhoods | 26.1 | 20.3 | 77.6 |
| highest income neighbourhoods | 25.4 | 21.5 | 84.7 |

**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. Amounts due at the end of each month are aggregated to arrive at amount due for the fiscal year. Adjustments to the amount due transactions that occur after the reference month are not incorporated. Total payments received include all payments received during the year, as well as any updates to payments received after the reference month (for example, an adjustment for a "non-sufficient funds" cheque or late notification of a direct payment). Some arrears payments received in the fiscal year pay down arrears that accrued before the fiscal year.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and 2006 Census of Population.

Table 6
Cases with arrears by type of neighbourhood, March 31st, 2008, seven census metropolitan areas

| Census metropolitan areas | Total cases | | Cases in arrears | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | number | percent | number | percent | median amount owing in dollars |
| **Halifax**[1] | **3,810** | **100** | **2,345** | **61.5** | **2,560** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 790 | 100 | 530 | 67.1 | 2,679 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 570 | 100 | 340 | 59.6 | 2,547 |
| **Moncton** | **1,735** | **100** | **1,175** | **67.7** | **2,240** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 350 | 100 | 240 | 68.6 | 2,544 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 250 | 100 | 165 | 66.0 | 1,805 |
| **Saint John** | **1,995** | **100** | **1,225** | **61.4** | **1,888** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 380 | 100 | 255 | 67.1 | 2,202 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 295 | 100 | 180 | 61.0 | 1,728 |
| **Regina** | **1,325** | **100** | **810** | **61.1** | **3,102** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 300 | 100 | 205 | 68.3 | 3,067 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 195 | 100 | 110 | 56.4 | 3,117 |
| **Saskatoon** | **1,325** | **100** | **770** | **58.1** | **3,819** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 320 | 100 | 205 | 64.1 | 3,420 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 215 | 100 | 115 | 53.5 | 3,583 |
| **Calgary**[2] | **7,380** | **100** | **4,825** | **65.4** | **6,476** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 1,980 | 100 | 1,400 | 70.7 | 6,381 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 1,170 | 100 | 685 | 58.5 | 5,723 |
| **Edmonton**[2] | **9,760** | **100** | **6,175** | **63.3** | **6,025** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 2,260 | 100 | 1,530 | 67.7 | 6,182 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 1,635 | 100 | 950 | 58.1 | 6,000 |
| **Total** | **27,330** | **100** | **17,325** | **63.4** | **4,411** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 6,380 | 100 | 4,365 | 68.4 | 4,766 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 4,330 | 100 | 2,545 | 58.8 | 4,145 |

1. In Nova Scotia, arrears owing does not include default on penalties and fees.
2. In Alberta, arrears due includes interest owing. Alberta began charging interest on a monthly basis on all outstanding arrears in September 2008.

**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order and interjurisdictional support order-out cases with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. As a result of the random rounding methodology, some small differences can be expected in the corresponding values between tables.

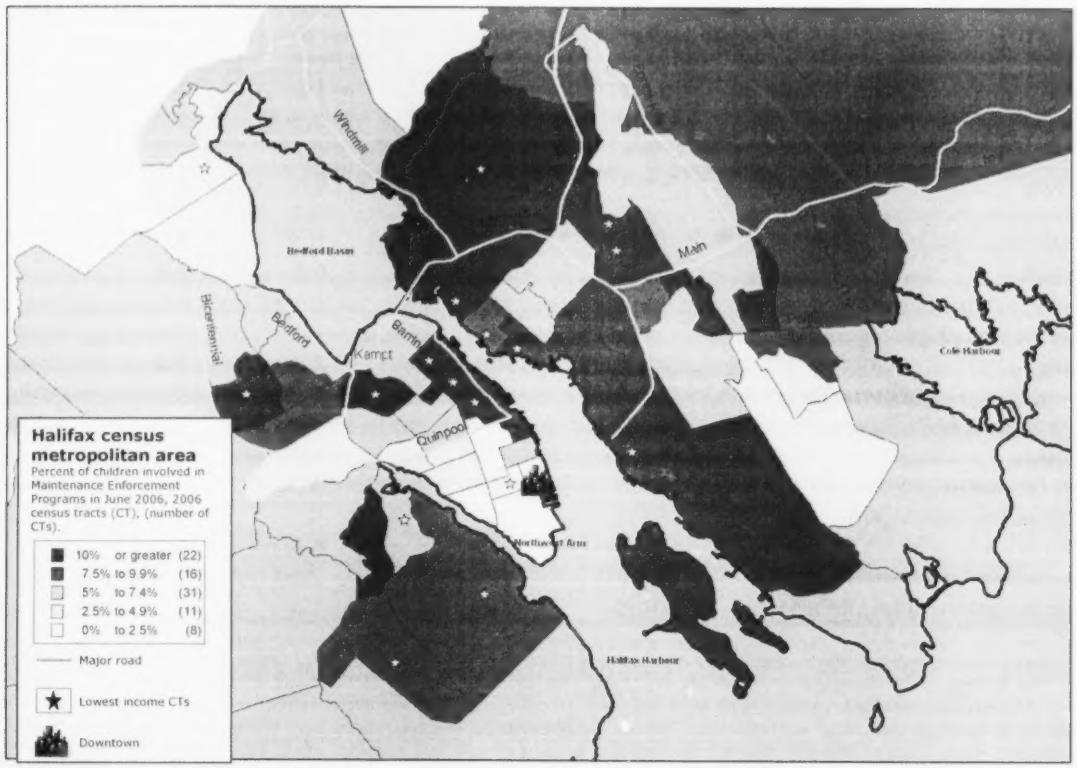
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and Census of Population, 2006.

Table 7
Federal interceptions and garnishments, as a proportion of total payment received, 2008/2009, five census metropolitan areas

| | Total amount received | | Estimated amount from federal interceptions and garnishments | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Census metropolitan areas | amount in millions of dollars | percent | amount in millions of dollars | percent |
| **Halifax** | **13.2** | **100** | **1.3** | **9.8** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 2.2 | 100 | 0.3 | 12.9 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 2.1 | 100 | 0.2 | 7.8 |
| **Moncton** | **4.3** | **100** | **0.4** | **8.2** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 0.8 | 100 | 0.1 | 7.4 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 0.6 | 100 | 0.1 | 8.9 |
| **Saint John** | **6.3** | **100** | **0.5** | **7.6** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 0.7 | 100 | 0.1 | 11.0 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 1.4 | 100 | 0.1 | 5.4 |
| **Calgary** | **32.1** | **100** | **2.3** | **7.2** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 7.0 | 100 | 0.7 | 10.5 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 6.5 | 100 | 0.3 | 4.3 |
| **Edmonton** | **45.9** | **100** | **3.9** | **8.4** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 8.3 | 100 | 1.0 | 12.0 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 9.5 | 100 | 0.7 | 6.9 |
| **Total** | **101.9** | **100** | **8.3** | **8.1** |
| Lowest income neighbourhoods | 18.9 | 100 | 2.1 | 11.3 |
| Highest income neighbourhoods | 20.1 | 100 | 1.2 | 6.1 |

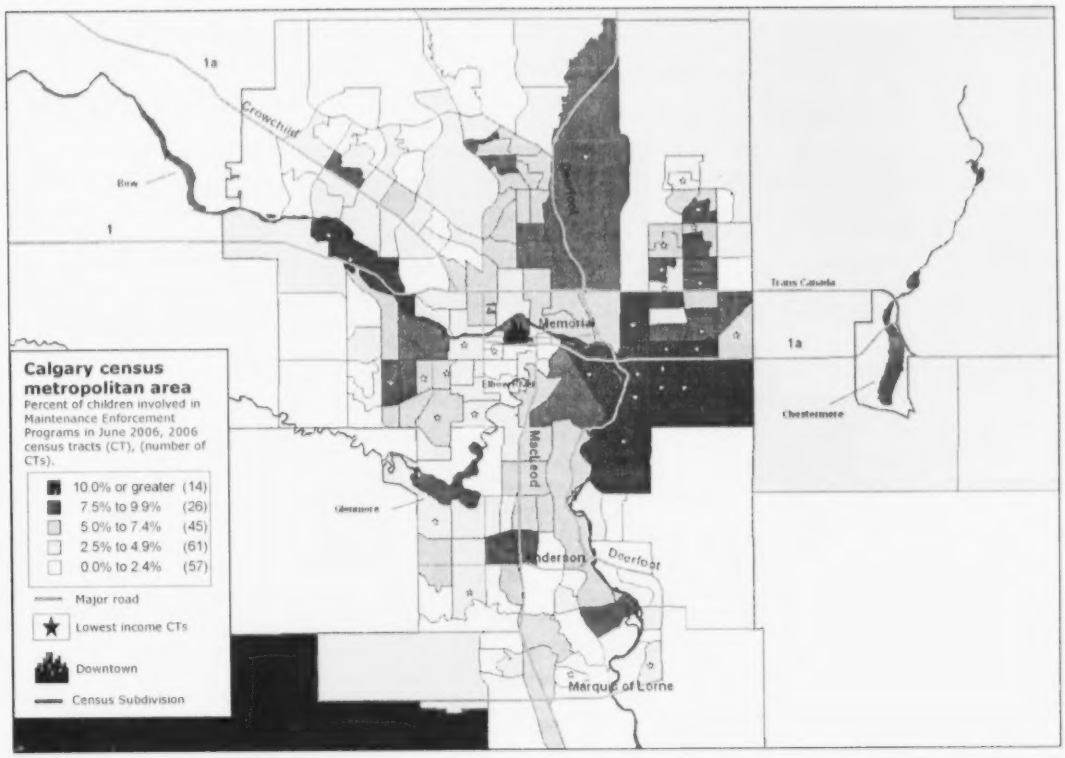
**Note:** Includes non-interjurisdiction support order cases only with at least one child beneficiary under the age of 20 and with a known location. The Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs receives data on a monthly basis from the Maintenance Enforcement Programs. The payment received variable is an aggregation of all payments received in the reference month, less any adjustments to those payments received that occur in the month. The source of payment variable relates only to the last payment received. Thus, if some payments were received through different sources, the amount of payment received would be either overstated or understated, based upon which payment source was associated with the last payment made in the month. The extent of this limitation cannot be quantified; however the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics did assess the reasonableness of the estimates.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs and Census of Population, 2006.

Map 1 Halifax
Percentage of children (19 years and under) enrolled in the provincial Maintenance Enforcement Program and location of lowest income neighbourhoods, June 2006 by census tracts (CTs) in urban core



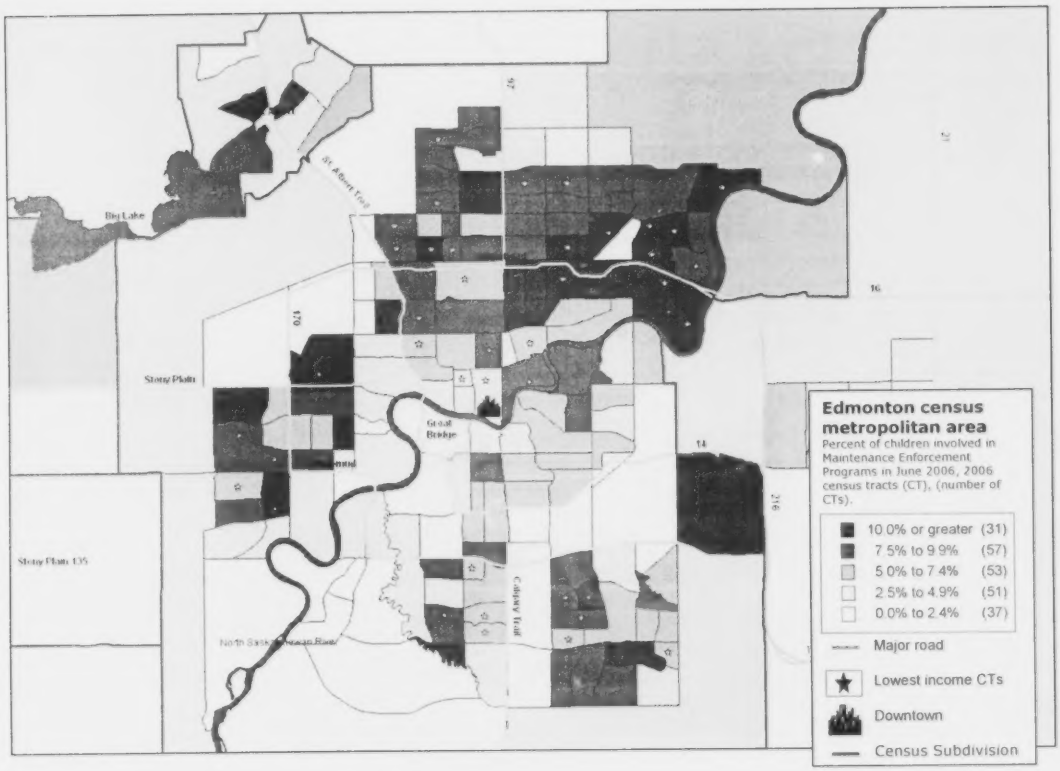

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population and Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

Map 2 Calgary
Percentage of children (19 years and under) enrolled in the provincial Maintenance Enforcement Program and location of lowest income neighbourhoods, June 2006 by census tracts (CTs) in urban core




**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population and Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

Map 3 Edmonton
Percentage of children (19 years and under) enrolled in the provincial Maintenance Enforcement Program and location of lowest income neighbourhoods, June 2006 by census tracts (CTs) in urban core


Big Lake
Stony Plain
Stony Plain 135
Edmonton census metropolitan area
Percent of children involved in Maintenance Enforcement Programs in June 2006, 2006 census tracts (CT), (number of CTs).
10.0% or greater (31)
7.5% to 9.9% (57)
5.0% to 7.4% (53)
2.5% to 4.9% (51)
0.0% to 2.4% (37)
Major road
Lowest income CTs
Downtown
Census Subdivision

**Source:** Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population and Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs.

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## Notes

1. Census Agglomerations with an urban core population of 50,000 or more in previous Census have CTs as well, however the number of CTs is small, limiting the analysis.

2. Some limitations exist between the Census definition of female lone-parent families and families enrolled in MEPs. Female lone-parent families include widows and widowers (about 20% of the 1.4 million lone-parent families in Canada); in MEPs, if the payor of child support passes away, the MEP will usually close the case. As well, families with only adult children living at home are included in the Census classification, but families enrolled in MEPs are excluded from this analysis if all children in the family are 20 years or older.

3. Neighbourhoods with less than 30 female lone-parent families are excluded. In all CMAs, this is less than 5% of total neighbourhoods.

4. Data from the most recent fiscal year, 2008/2009, are used to present maintenance enforcement statistics by income level of the neighbourhood, thus allowing data from New Brunswick and Saskatchewan to be incorporated in the report. The income level of the neighbourhood was determined using the 2006 Census of Population, and is based on 2005 incomes. Data from 2005/2006 to 2008/2009 for Halifax, Calgary and Edmonton were analysed, and for all SMEP indicators used in this report, there was very little fiscal year variation in the results for each income quintile over the four-year period.

5. The 2006 Census collected information on 2005 income.

6. Children from cases with unknown postal codes are excluded from sub-provincial analysis. The number of children with unknown postal codes on July 1, 2008 ranged from 1% in New Brunswick to 5% in Alberta. Thus, the proportion of children enrolled in MEPs in the CMAs is slightly underestimated.

7. In Alberta and in Saskatchewan, registration with the MEP is mandatory for recipients on social assistance.

8. This part of the analysis is limited to CMAs in Nova Scotia and Alberta, as these were the only jurisdictions that were reporting data to the Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs in May 2006, the reference period for the 2006 Census of Population. The Census is the main source for census tract data.

9. This is based on all cases for which Alberta had primary enforcement responsibility. Primary enforcement responsibility is all Non-ISO/ISO-in cases enrolled. In these cases, the payor resides in the jurisdiction and the MEP is responsible for enforcing payment. For ISO-out cases, where the recipient lives in-province and the payor resides in another jurisdiction, the reciprocating jurisdiction (i.e. the jurisdiction where the payor resides) usually handles the enforcement. Alberta data were used as an example because there was more complete reporting of enforcement actions. In other jurisdictions, some actions are not reported to the SMEP because data on the enforcement action are not stored electronically in the MEP information system.

10. There are some limitations around source of payment received in the SMEP. The SMEP receives data on a monthly basis from the MEPs. Multiple payments can be received in any given month; however, the source of payment information relates only to the last payment received. The total amount received for the month less any adjustments will be attributed to the last payment source. Thus the amount of payment received by source could be either overstated or understated. The extent of this limitation is unknown.

11. This is based on non-ISO cases, i.e. those cases being enforced by the local MEP. ISO-out cases that are being enforced by a MEP in another jurisdiction are excluded, as details on the source of payment are not available. The majority of cases are non-ISO.